

TREATMENT OF FLORIDA PRISONERS

Address of Governor Gilchrist Before the National Prison Congress—Death Rate Ranks With Lowest.

Seattle, Wash., Aug. 18, 1909.
To the Editor Ocala Banner:

Governor Gilchrist of Florida spoke as follows today to the National Prison Congress, now in session in this city:

Mr. President, and Members of the National Prison Association of the United States:

As governor, and chairman of the board of state institutions of the state of Florida, which board has full supervision of the prison affairs of the state, and as chairman of the board of pardons, it becomes my privilege and pleasure to address you in reference to the prison conditions of our state.

As many of you know, Florida continues what is known as the "lease system." Our prisoners are now leased to a strong company, owning many hundred thousand acres of timber lands, operating sawmills and turpentine farms. While using most of the prisoners, they sub-lease some of them, to be employed in phosphate mines and on turpentine farms, and in sawmills. This company owns pine lands, sawmills, and turpentine farms throughout the state. Should it become advisable, their own business is of sufficient proportions to employ all the convicts leased by them. They will, however, probably sub-lease some of them. I can give you no more authoritative idea of the restrictions imposed upon the lessee, and of the lease system itself than by quoting from the contract made with the lessee. This contract provides that the prisoners shall not "be worked or made to labor before sunrise or after sunset, nor more than ten hours on any one day, or be made to work on the Sabbath day."

"No prisoner shall be permitted to leave the stockade before sunrise and must be returned by sundown; provided, that the prisoner, if he so desires, may make satisfactory terms between himself and the lessee, and work over-time, the prisoner to receive compensation therefor, and the conditions to be approved by the commissioner of agriculture."

As a matter of fact, the prisoners are usually given certain tasks, some of whom finish them easily by Friday of each week, in such cases having Saturday either to work for pay, or to rest; in most cases they all complete their work in time to have Saturday afternoon.

The contract provides that the lessee "shall furnish each and every such prisoner comfortable quarters and lodging, good and comfortable clothing, including bedding and blankets, wholesome food, and when any of them shall be sick or disabled, necessary medicine and medical attendance and proper personal care; their allowance of food and clothing, including bedding and blankets, to be prescribed by the board of commissioners of state institutions of said state, from time to time." This board consists of the governor and every member of the cabinet.

"These prisoners shall be furnished with separate iron cot bedsteads of certain prescribed dimensions. Each bed shall have a good, clean mattress and pillow, also three pillow cases, four sheets and two pairs of blankets. There shall be kept in stock at each prison camp at all times, for the use of the prisoners, not less than three suits of stripes, three suits of underclothing, including socks, two pairs of shoes, one hat, two night shirts for each and every prisoner located at every prison or camp."

The lessees provide for each prison camp a physician to "examine, treat and care for and watch over all and each of such prisoners received and kept by them, and will secure his regular attention, examination, treatment and care of them in such manner and of such frequency and fidelity as may be satisfactory to or prescribed by the board of commissioners."

The lessees are required to "provide a central hospital, or hospitals," the location to be designated by the commissioner of agriculture, the hospital to be "fully equipped" with beds having "comfortable springs;" to be thoroughly equipped with a dispensary, operating room and all the necessary drugs, surgical implements and other equipment and supplies incident to a modern first class hospital.

"The lessee shall establish such rules and regulations for the conduct and management of said hospital as may be prescribed by the board of commissioners of state institutions." "There shall be deducted from the amount due" by the lessee, "the time lost by each inmate of said hospital. The lessee pays all expenses of conducting and maintaining said hospital." The commissioner of agriculture selects a physician at the central hospital or hospitals.

The lessee "shall establish in each stockade, when practicable, water

works and sewerage system for sanitary purposes, at their own expense, the commissioner of agriculture to decide the question of practicability." As a matter of fact, bathing facilities are established at every camp or stockade.

"At each camp a vegetable garden shall be maintained for furnishing sufficient vegetables for the prisoners."

All the camps "shall be built and maintained upon plans and specifications approved by the commissioner of agriculture and the board of commissioners of state institutions. "Provision is made for securing full description of the prisoners, marks, photographs and other means."

"The lessee shall enforce such regulations as may be prescribed, for the health, humane treatment and safe custody of the prisoners. The wardens, captains and guards shall always be subject to the approval of the commissioner of agriculture. Any guard shall be removed upon his request."

Heretofore the state has been leasing all of its prisoners, including women, and the old and infirm. Upon the recommendation of the commissioner of agriculture and of the governor, the legislature of 1909 appropriated \$50,000, and directed the board of commissioners of state institutions to purchase not less than 500 acres, suitable for a penitentiary and state prison farm. The commissioners were directed to "withhold from lessee all females, the aged, diseased, crippled, deformed, and all other prisoners, who, in the discretion of the said board are not suited to perform manual labor."

This will serve as a nucleus for the state penitentiary. The number of prisoners now handled in Florida ranges from 1700 to 1750. The death rate is 12.60 in 1907, to 11.30 in 1908 per thousand. "In most cases the prisoners die from the effect of diseases contracted prior to entering the state prison." This death rate is less than what it is in some insurance companies in which, of course, they pick their members. The U. S. census of 1900, Vol. 3, P. 56, registration area U. S., embracing the New England states, New York, New Jersey, Michigan and the District of Columbia, the death rate is 17.8 per thousand.

Our prisoners work in the open air and in the open sun. They also enjoy conversation and singing and music among themselves. At night, the negroes make the camps ring with their songs. None of them are shackled.

The following is the death rate from such other states as I have been able to secure the necessary information:

Death Rate Per Thousand in State Prisons

For 1907: Florida, 12.60; Louisiana, 18.50; Indiana, 15.37; Virginia, 14.46; Connecticut, none; Mississippi, 20.42; New Jersey, 9.90; South Carolina, 35.28.

For 1908: Florida, 11.30; Louisiana, 18.50; Indiana, 11.68; Virginia, 13.08; Connecticut, 16.10; Mississippi, 15.06; New Jersey, 14.50; South Carolina, 22.25.

For the years 1907 and 1908: Tennessee, 5.72; Michigan, 7.90; Alabama, 44.45.

It might be interesting to know some of the detailed statistics as to our prisoners. During the year 1908, 1856 were handled, 26 of whom died. There were committed during the year, 446; white females, none; white males, 75; colored females, 15; colored males, 356. Of this number only 127 were natives of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina furnishing 150, North Carolina, 40; Virginia, 15; Mississippi, 10. The remainder were born in various parts of the United States and some in European countries.

The various forms of stealing, manslaughter, murder and assault to murder represent more than one-half of the commitments. Most of the commitments for manslaughter, murder and assault to murder among the negroes result from jealousy and fighting among themselves.

The employment of convicts in our state has not so far conflicted with the employment of free labor. At present there is not enough labor in the state necessary for the turpentine farms, phosphate mines and sawmills, the industries in which convicts are altogether employed. After the expiration of their sentences many of the negroes seek employment in the turpentine farms and the mines and sawmills, having become more or less efficient hands in such industries. A turpentine hand makes from \$1.50 to \$2.50 per day.

We have a reform school for boys and girls, in which they are given a certain amount of education, and at which school trades are taught them. For one, I do not consider that the

indeterminate sentence would work well in our state, especially where such a large proportion of our convicts are negroes. In such instances, it is well to have a certain sentence fixed and a certain number of months per year to be taken from their sentence on account of good behavior. In addition to this, there is always a chance for a continual pardon. There are probably not over four or five full pardons granted a year, conditional pardons being granted on condition of continued good behavior. Such a pardon restores the right of citizenship.

We have a system of inspection by which the camps are inspected once in every one or two months. The inspectors make thorough reports, showing the condition of the camps and reporting all grievances. It is also their duty to recommend, without charge, suitable persons for pardon. In our climate, it is more or less absolutely necessary that a large body of criminals should not be huddled together in a close inclosure. At present they are divided into about 41 camps, in which houses are built, surrounded by modern palisades or walls. There are really 41 state penitentiaries. When the lease system is discontinued it will, of course, be necessary to consolidate them all into one, two or more farms. Every possible effort is made to protect these unfortunate convicts from mistreatment.

In Florida, short term convicts, sentenced by local courts, are leased out by the county commissioners, and the terms and conditions prescribed for their care and treatment and use, vary greatly, and are very irregular. In some of the counties a reduction of time is allowed for good behavior of the convicts, while in others there is no such reduction. In some counties it is required that decent clothing and a small amount of money be given to each prisoner when released. In other counties discharged prisoners are given nothing. The state makes provision for each of these allowances. Experience has shown that when serious wrongs are perpetrated in the treatment of county convicts, criticisms are hurled at the whole system, regardless of the successful efforts which the state and many counties are making to have the lease system operated in a careful and humane manner. Some of the newspapers are too politic to locate the responsibility for abuses which occur, to place blame where it belongs, preferring instead to bring a general indictment against the whole lease system, thereby doing gross injustice to the state and to a number of the counties which have gone a long ways towards perfecting said system.

UPWARD TENDENCY OF TURPENTINE

There was a steady market for turps during the entire week, with a fairly healthy demand as far as domestic business goes, but with little snap to the foreign trade. The market ranged about 50 1-4 cents, with 50 cents bids and factors refusing that price on Thursday and Friday. This (Saturday) morning, a buyer doing both a domestic and export business, came in as a free buyer at 50 1-4, others followed in a similar way, and the market was swept bare of supplies at that price. The market was considered in good shape at 50 1-4, and factors were extremely confident that a new peg had been inserted at 50 cents on which to build hopes of future improvements. The falling off in the foreign demand thus far has been one of the drawbacks to the situation. The United States government reports show a falling off in foreign shipments of turps so far this season of 40,000 casks. This may be due to consumers abroad falling back on their cheapest reserve stocks accumulated on the low prices of last year, or to their pursuing a determined hand to mouth policy, based on their belief that the difference in production this year, as compared with last year, has been fully offset by the difference in prices as compared with last year. The prevalent idea abroad seem to be that the much higher values prevailing than last year have effectively discounted the shortage in crop. The facts take a different view of the situation, but the continued aloofness of the foreign trade is a factor that tells against values. The American demand affords more reason for hopefulness, however.—Sav. Naval Stores Review.

THE AVOCADO, OR ALLIGATOR PEAR

The Avocado, or Alligator pear, is as yet so little known that we think it well to devote some space, hoping to help to make this delicious fruit better known. The fruit is in a class entirely by itself. Nothing in the fruit line is in any way similar or approaching the Avocado. We will say briefly that the Avocado, or Alligator pear came originally from India, where it became immensely popular with the resident, tourist and business classes of foreigners.—Modello Tropical Topics.

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FRANK P. GADSON, Proprietor

A VALUABLE MACHINE

Mr. S. J. Jones, of the R. C. Davis Company, Jacksonville, made a business trip to Ocala yesterday in the interest of his firm. While here he placed with the Munroe & Chambliss Bank an Elliott-Fisher writing machine for use in that institution.

This machine is one of the most complete writing machines on the market, and its possibilities on the work for which it was designed are almost unlimited. It writes, tabulates and adds all at one operation, thus saving a great deal of time in listing and forwarding the foreign daily business of the bank.

The Davis Company, of which Mr. Jones is a member, has the state agency for this machine, as well as for the Fay-Sholes typewriter, than which there is probably no more extensively used machine in the state, all due to the hustle and energy of Messrs. Jones and Davis.

PILES! PILES! PILES!

Williams' Indian Pile Ointment will cure Blind, Bleeding and Itching Piles. It absorbs the tumors, allays the itching at once, acts as a poultice, gives instant relief. Williams' Indian Pile Ointment is prepared for Piles and itching of the private parts. Sold by druggists; mail 50c and \$1.00. Sold by Tydings & Co.

Mr. J. H. Curry, son of the late Rev. J. H. Curry, who formerly made their home in this city, is now editor of the Iloilo (P. I.) Saturday evening Star, a very creditable publication of six and eight pages. The last number to reach this office is of date July 3, and tells of great preparations being made to celebrate the Fourth of July in a patriotic and becoming manner. Following are the headlines, "Ready for the Fourth;" "Greatest Celebration in Iloilo's History;" "Parades, Music, Sports and Oratory Galore;" "Thousands of Visitors Coming From the Interior;" "Pyrotechnic Display and Music at Night." Then the program is given, which occupies the greater part of a double column. As the Saturday Evening Star gives an account of an alligator swallowing one of the native babies, and tells of oranges and similar fruits, it is like reading news from home. We congratulate Mr. Curry on the appearance of his paper, and hope that he will accumulate as many riches as some of the Florida editors, live in a palace and ride in an automobile.

Under Georgia's new law "near-beer," (another name for the genuine article), can be sold in some of the cities and towns of that state.

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SCORE ONE FOR OKLAHOMA
Freak and erratic laws may issue from the "baby state" of Oklahoma in a degree to terrify the judicious brethren of the east, but in one respect, at least, the new commonwealth has set an inspiring example to her older sisters.

The criminal court of appeals of Oklahoma recently handed down the dictum that thenceforth "no case will be reversed merely upon a showing of harmless error in the trial."

This pronouncement was promulgated in the instance of the attempt of the attorney of a wife murderer to secure a new trial upon an absolutely technical plea.

In affirming the decision of the lower court, the appellate court declared that "the reversal of just convictions of the guilty upon purely technical questions is the prime cause of want of confidence in the courts. This want of confidence often results in mob violence on the part of a long suffering and outraged public."

It is an eternal pity that this sound ruling, justified in ethics and equity, as well as sense, should not be made the settled procedure of every court in the land.

Had the principle here laid down prevailed in the administration of American justice, criminal and civil for the last half century, the law would not have been visited with the quasi-contempt it arouses here and there, and the spectacle of extra-legal justice would have been less frequent than in the past.—Atlanta Constitution.

Neither lead, hemp nor fuel seems to quench the demon lust in the negro. Why not try the surgeon's knife and enact it into our code of laws?